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To Whom it May Concern

I would introduce Amadou Camara by briefly introducing his Great Grand Dad Saikou Camara. The Camara clan hails from a noble and religious tribe in the Republic of Gambia in West Africa that put great value to education. My Grand father Saikou decided at an early age that he would get himself the best education he could. In this quest he traveled abroad to a neighboring country to get himself the highest level of education attainable at that time. He farmed and studied with his new host for the next seven years. After seven years of study Grand Dad graduated. His graduation coincided with the years harvest so he volunteered to stay and help with the harvest. As fate would have it, he fell sick and died a few weeks into the harvest. His teacher and mentor was inconsolable, In those days, in those lands, there were no newspapers, no radio, or TV or internet. Ones students were your only ambassadors in foreign lands, this coupled with the fact that Saikou, my Grand Dad left a young family behind, the eldest at 4 yrs being my Dad. My Grand Mom's sense of personal loss was boundless. In mourning she would cry and ask how she would bring up three young children, herself being uneducated and without means. My Grand Dad's teacher then prayed that Grand Pa's quest of education and success grow stronger with every generation. I strongly believe this has come to pass. My Dad for his part went on to educate himself not formally but by going to night school. He was so respected by his peers and the community that he was nominated unopposed as District representative to the state assembly. Dad being so humble in turn recommended his childhood friend who had a more formal education to the assembly.

I could remember from a young age my Dad drumming the value of service and education into us. I was fortunate to avail myself of a good education and have been fortunate to have represented my former government in a number of positions. But unfortunately after a military coup I had to leave my country ( GAMBIA) due to disagreement with the military government's policies.

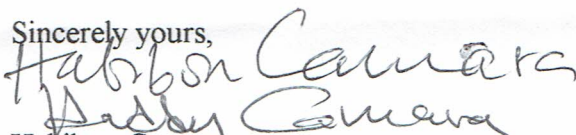
I arrived at JFK airport with a lot of hope and twenty dollars in my pocket. I accepted a position as a security guard in the Wall Street area of Manhattan, New York. My wage then was \$4.25/hr. After 2 yrs of 16 hr days I was able to pay for my wife and 2 kids to join me in America. During the time I worked around Wall Street one could not fail to see the prestige and succes of wall street executives going about their daily lives. I decided then it was too late for me but vowed someday my child would be a Wall Street Executive. I could recall one day while Amadou was still in preschool taking him to the spot were the bronze bull stands just off Wall Street and took a picture of him and solemnly promising to bringing him back to the same spot upon getting a job on Wall street. Fast forward almost twenty years later after a lot of hard work and pain, Amadou

got a job with JP Morgan and Chase which is a stone throw from that spot. I now have a contrasting picture taken of Amadou at the same spot almost twenty years later. Looking up at Amadou's office in the Chase skyscraper I recall Dad telling me before he passed on that he dreamt of me in my office in a skyscraper and me having to remind him as a security guard I was confined to the lobby. It finally dawned on me it was Amadou ( his little Maverick as he fondly calls him) he might have seen. My dad has always had a special relationship with his little maverick. I recall Amadou being the winner of Dane county Martin Luther King scholarship to a deserving high school student. The night prior to the award ceremony my dad's condition turned for the worst so we decided as a family to skip the ceremony. I call my Mom in Africa to tell her about that decision. My Dad upon hearing insisted his little maverick be taken to receive this great honor. So the following morning the entire family went to Madison for the award ceremony. I had my cell phone on just in case. The moment Amadou picked up his award letter and was walking off stage towards us, my phone began to ring incessantly. I answered with my mom telling me dad had just passed. I knew nothing would have stopped Dad from seeing his little maverick receive such an honor.

Amadou's story can only happen in America. This is analogous to taking your four year old child to Lambeau field and promising to bring him back as the quarterback twenty years later. How improbable is that especially for and Africa America child some of whose friends have dropped out of high school or college or are in prison. Amadou has done a good job navigating those perils.

I believe America is a land of hope, freedom, opportunity and above all second chances. Amadou has worked hard and diligently all his life. This would all still remain a dream without his hard work. I can only pray and hope that he will be given a second chance. Grand Dad Saikou was his father's first born son, my Dad was Saikou's first son, I am my Dad's first son and Amadou is my first and only son. I pray this beautiful journey does not stop with Amadou. He is American through and through, from pre K to graduating at UW Madison. He has no connections to Africa.

Thank you

Sincerely yours,  
  
Habibou Camara  
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